

Breaking Ground: Ohio Company Ventures into Hemp Cultivation for Bioplastic Solutions

Ohio Hemp Company has partnered with Heartland Industries in Michigan to cultivate hemp fiber for bioplastic production.

1.

Hemp for Bioplastics: A Promising Partnership

A hemp producer based in Dayton, Ohio, has struck a significant deal with a processor in nearby Michigan, marking a milestone in the burgeoning hemp-based bioplastics industry. Ohio Hemp Company's agreement with Detroit-based Heartland Industries paves the way for the supply of raw hemp material to be utilized in the production of bioplastics for auto parts manufactured by a Belgian firm.

2. Legalization and Transition: Ohio's Hemp Journey

Ohio's foray into hemp cultivation began with Governor Mike DeWine's signing of legislation to legalize hemp in 2019, following Congress's national legalization of the crop with the 2018 Farm Bill. Ohio Hemp Company, led by TJ Richardson and Justin Helt, seized the opportunity early, becoming pioneers in hemp farming in the state. Initially focusing on cannabinoid hemp for the booming CBD market, the company later shifted its focus to hemp varieties bred for grain and fiber.

3. The Versatility of Hemp: Exploring New Avenues

Recognizing the vast potential of hemp, Richardson and Helt embarked on a quest to explore diverse applications for the crop. Transitioning away from CBD hemp, they sought out businesses utilizing hemp in their products and discovered Heartland Industries, a Detroit-based hemp processing facility. This partnership led to collaboration with Ravago, a Belgian bioplastics manufacturer, opening doors to the utilization of hemp fiber in bioplastic production.

4. Overcoming Challenges: Navigating the Hemp Landscape

For Heartland Industries and the farmers it partners with, venturing into hemp cultivation posed numerous challenges. With decades of prohibition, the knowledge and infrastructure for hemp cultivation had waned. However, through perseverance and innovation, they overcame obstacles, relearning cultivation techniques

and adapting to the unique requirements of the crop.

5. The Production Process: Transforming Hemp into Bioplastics

Heartland Industries processes hemp fiber from Ohio Hemp Company and other Midwest farmers into small hemp pellets known as nurdles. These nurdles are then combined with plastic nurdles at Ravago to create a bioplastic blend comprising 70% plastic and 30% hemp fiber. This innovative material is utilized in the manufacturing of auto parts, offering both environmental benefits and performance advantages.

6. Scaling Operations: Meeting Growing Demand

As demand for hemp fiber grows, Heartland Industries expands its network of partner farmers beyond Michigan to neighboring states like Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio. Ohio Hemp Company, in response to the increasing demand, has ramped up its cultivation efforts, focusing on dual-purpose hemp varieties that yield both fiber and grain. With plans to double their acreage, the company is poised for significant growth in the coming years.

7. Building for the Future: Infrastructure and Innovation

Ohio Hemp Company is investing in infrastructure to support its expanding operations, including the construction of a new processing and storage facility. Additionally, the company is actively involved in researching new hemp varieties to optimize yield and quality, further cementing its position as a leader in the hemp industry.

8. A Testament to Growth: Seizing Opportunities

The new agreement with Heartland Industries signifies a milestone for Ohio Hemp Company and the broader hemp industry in Ohio. As the pieces of the hemp industry puzzle fall into place, from cultivation to processing to end products, it underscores the potential for hemp to drive economic growth and innovation in the region.

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